

# Wigdor LLP Files Gender-based Harassment Lawsuit Against NYU Langone Hospitals And Dr. John Kennedy

December 30, 2019 • News & Press

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On December 27, 2019, Wigdor LLP filed a gender discrimination and retaliation lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York on behalf of Susanne Schafmeister against NYU Langone Hospitals (“NYU Langone”) and Dr. John Kennedy, a world-renowned orthopedic surgeon who was hired by NYU Langone to head its brand-new Foot and Ankle Center.

As set forth in the Complaint, Ms. Schafmeister began working as the Operations Manager of Dr. Kennedy’s private practice in March 2007, about a year after the two developed a romantic relationship. In early 2018, while Dr. Kennedy was being courted to work for NYU Langone, he was adamant that NYU also hire Ms. Schafmeister because she was instrumental to his success while he was in private practice, according to the lawsuit.

However, by the end of 2018, as alleged, Ms. Schafmeister had decided to end her personal relationship with Dr. Kennedy. Hesitant to continue working with Dr. Kennedy after the breakup of their personal relationship, she ultimately accepted a position at NYU Langone as she expected that Dr. Kennedy would remain professional, the lawsuit alleges.

As alleged, Dr. Kennedy soon began subjecting Ms. Schafmeister to outrageous discriminatory harassment and retaliation in the workplace for her decision to end the relationship, including, but not limited to:

- Hiring private detectives to follow Ms. Schafmeister;
- Planting recording devices to record her conversations at work;
- Making numerous harassing comments to Ms. Schafmeister about her new boyfriend;
- Directing Ms. Schafmeister’s coworkers who were connected to her on social media to hand over their phones to show Dr. Kennedy pictures of Ms. Schafmeister with her new boyfriend;
- Forcing Ms. Schafmeister to talk to him in the workplace about their previous personal relationship;
- Repeatedly demanding during the workday that Ms. Schafmeister return every gift he has given her; and
- Threatening to have her terminated.

Ms. Schafmeister reported Dr. Kennedy’s frightening and harassing conduct to NYU Langone’s Human Resources (“HR”) department — and even provided text message and video evidence to corroborate her claims — however NYU Langone took zero timely remedial action, as alleged.

Moreover, the lawsuit alleges that during the purported “investigation” into Ms. Schafmeister’s

complaints, Dr. Kennedy brazenly engaged in witness intimidation; for example, immediately prior to one doctor's interview with HR, he was called into a meeting with Dr. Kennedy and Dr. Kennedy's lawyer, during which Dr. Kennedy directed him to sign a non-disclosure agreement in an attempt to prevent him from communicating with HR.

As alleged, Dr. Kennedy also threatened to have Ms. Schafmeister arrested based on contrived allegations that she stole money from him. Ms. Schafmeister also reported this to HR and, as alleged in the lawsuit, NYU's HR team again took no remedial action. Emboldened by NYU's apathy, Dr. Kennedy had Ms. Schafmeister arrested and she now faces criminal charges based on his false reports to police.

Ms. Schafmeister is represented by Wigdor LLP Partner [Michael J. Willemin](#) and Associate [Hilary J. Orzick](#).

Statement from Michael J. Willemin, Partner at Wigdor LLP:

*"As alleged in the complaint, NYU Langone took a completely apathetic approach to Dr. Kennedy's conduct. Rather than protect the victim, NYU has chosen to stand by Dr. Kennedy, who is still employed by the Hospital and treating patients. This is completely unacceptable, particularly in the post-#MeToo era, and we believe that a jury will agree."*

[Read the Full Complaint Here](#)

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